

DULUTH AMERICAN INDIAN COMMISSION MEETING
Monday, March 15, 2010 - 5:00 p.m.
Mayor's Reception Room
Room 405, 4th Floor City Hall

Present: Donna Ennis, Ricky DeFoe, Warner Wirta, Joy Dorscher, Ron Boshey, Donna Bluebird, Donovan Strong (to be sworn in March 22)

Excused Absence: Toni Dickenson, Bea Kitto, Michele Gordon

Unexcused Absence: Renee Van Nett

CALL TO ORDER, APPROVAL OF AGENDA AND INTRODUCTIONS:

Call to order at 5:08.

Motion by Ron Boshey, seconded by Donna Bluebird, to approve the agenda.
The motion was unanimously approved.

Introductions proceeded of commissioners and community members present.

REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM THE FEBRUARY 22, 2010 MEETING:

Motion by Donna Ennis, seconded by Ron Boshey, to approve the February 22, 2010 minutes as written. The motion was unanimously approved.

COMMUNITY PUBLIC FORUM/OPEN COMMENT PERIOD:

Brenda Rice is speaking on behalf of her daughter Cassandra Wright, who was a victim of a stabbing. The person who committed the crime has admitted to the crime and is not being convicted. Miss Wright is now being evicted because her lease allows for eviction in the event of illegal activities. She has been in this place for three years; she is raising two sons on her own while a full-time students at Fond du Lac Community College. She was stabbed in the left shoulder which prevented her from returning to school for a week and she now has to meet with the president of the college in order to be able to return. This is apparently the policy of the college. There had been some text interactions between Miss Wright and Shana Hill (the woman who stabbed her). When the police came they entered with guns drawn pointed at her and her brother, who was trying to stop the bleeding. This incident occurred on March 4th around 4:30 pm. Miss Hill wrote a note of apology to Miss Wright that was delivered by the police while she was being treated in the hospital. No charges will be brought because the stabbing occurred in Miss Hill's home, although this was disputed by Miss Wright, who stated it occurred in a common area of the apartment building. The county attorney who they talked to about the case is Mark Ruben. They had been trying to get a copy of the police report but have been unable to do so.

Ricky DeFoe thanked Brenda Rice and her Daughter Cassandra Wright for coming to talk with the DAIC. He stated that it was important for these kinds of issues to be brought here in order to be able to correct them. The county attorney is here tonight and we have been working with the county attorneys' office and the police department to correct some of these matters, Ron Boshey has been looking into other complaints

and he asked what can be done about the housing issue, which is most urgent as she has to be out on the 22nd of this month, even though she got the notice last night in the mail. The rental company is Thies & Talle,

Donna Ennis asked if it was possible for a company to evict a tenant in the span of a week. Ron Boshey responded that legally they do have the right to evict without a 30-day notice, but as she is a victim in the crime it is not really fair. Now when she goes to the city of Duluth to apply for housing they will see this infraction, will believe her to be a violent person and refuse her housing. Future options would be to meet with Thies & Talle as well as Bowman Company in order to make some kind of an arrangement such as probation in a situation like this rather than evict her. Folks who come out of jail may not be rented to under these conditions either. In this situation, with the commission's support could meet with the family and with Gordon Ramsey and find out the extent of the "illegal" situation and provide details to demonstrate that she is the victim and should be able to stay in her home of three years. Perhaps Gordon Ramsey could help come up with a solution that will allow her to stay in her home rather than turned out on the streets.

Donna Bluebird stated that if Miss Wright did not get satisfaction with St. Louis county then keep going. It may take moving beyond the county in order to get satisfaction in this incident.

Rickey Defoe asked Melanie Ford, who was present at the meeting, if this was accurate. County Attorney Ford stated that the charges are based on the case brought to them by the police department. One would need to look at the police report.

Ron Boshey will give exchange contact information with Brenda Rice and Cassandra Wright and he and Donovan Strong will meet with Gordon Ramsey as soon as possible and get reports and assist the family in whatever way they can. Melanie Ford will check into the reports as well. Ron Boshey and Donovan Strong will set up a future meeting with Thies and Talle and Bowman. HRA needs to start on housing people so one will not be victimized again after having been a victim of a crime. Donna Ennis stated that she would be willing to write a letter from the DAIC to Theis and Talle and Bowman to invite them to a meeting to discuss further.

Bob Grytdahl reported from Human Rights Office that the Warrant Work Out program is coming. There are about 4000 outstanding warrants for arrest and the people named can come in to deal with these warrants; they may not be fully involved in life or worried if they have contact with police. If they are brought in on a warrant they are likely to have some jail time. On May 5th in the afternoon in the St. Louis County Court house, all of the players are agreed and will support this. There will be a public defender and those with non-violent warrants may get them taken care of without jail time. Most of these kinds of crimes are likely to be plea-bargained anyway. DAIC members are invited to this event. There is a phone number and website to see if one has an outstanding warrant for them. There is no assurance that they will not go to jail, but in other cities where this is done only 10% end up in jail.

Bill Morrison presented two questions: who decides on the selection of the DAIC? He

has applied to be a member of the DAIC but continues to get rejection letters from Mayor Ness. It is his feeling that the members of the DAIC should be able to decide who is on the Commission. There are many times when Mr. Morrison has been accused of being arrogant, brash but it was not meant to be disrespectful. He runs a successful tribal program because he has solutions. Donna Ennis read several areas of the DAIC bylaws including that the commission should represent the diversity in the area, with a majority of the commissioners who live in the area; they are appointed by the mayor and approved by the city council. The Mayor's process is unknown. Ron Boshey stated the he has spoken to Mayor Ness on several occasions and the mayor stated that we as commissioners should decide who we want on the board from the list of applicants, the mayor will then approve the individual and the city council then approves the appointment. Ness said as a commission we need to change the bylaws if we want to utilize this process. Rickey DeFoe stated that the bylaws are one thing the traditions are something else, we should be allowed to pick, but most recently (past 2 years) with Ness as mayor, he has given us that direction. We should amend the bylaws. Donna Ennis asked what would happen if we were unable to agree on who should be on the commission? Mr. Morrison stated that the majority should be allowed to rule.

Rickey DeFoe stated that mayor is aware that the DAIC is running without the 11 stated in the bylaws but will wait until next year to bring the number up to this amount. Donovan Strong suggested that every year go through the bylaws, make suggestions for change and set out a strategic plan to decide what to do in the year. Donna Ennis assured Commissioner Strong that this is already being done. Warner Wirta reminded us that this DAIC is the first in the US, and agreed with the idea that we should meet to improve the bylaws because of the swiftness with which society changes, so there needs to be a set up where we can change the bylaws perhaps every two years. Rickey DeFoe stated that the commission would do what we need to do and amend the bylaws.

OLD BUSINESS

AICHO's Gimaajii (YWCA Housing/Indian Center) Report – Sherry Sanchez Tibbetts greeted the DAIC and reminded us that we had met with some members of the DAIC and at that meeting she was told that we would like to have written updates as we often have a difficult time keeping up with such a complex process. She provided a one-page update. Because of the economy the US Bank's Historic Preservation Fund closed; however, another investor covered this. They recently were able to secure an additional \$50,000 from the Shakopee tribe; this was a 2-week turn around. They are working with contractor Kraus Anderson to reduce the budget for the project. They will be closing housing finance will close in mid-April and an end to construction in March 2011. Ricky DeFoe stated that the community needed reassurance that this project would not fail.

Ron Boshey thanked Sherry Sanchez Tibbetts for the update and stated that the one-page update was exactly what we needed to feel confident in the project. Sherry Sanchez Tibbetts reminded the DAIC that she had asked an elder woman to name the project, this was done in a traditional way and obligated her to complete the program and she is dedicated to doing that, no matter the challenges. Donna Ennis stated that

after last week's meeting she was reminded by Dr. Powless, a strong supporter of the project, that this is not AICHO's full time job and that we might consider that when we are evaluating the progress of the project. She thanked AICHO for their work.

Juvenile Justice Reform Update – County Attorney Melanie Ford brought a sheet along to update the commission on the JDAI> She wanted to share the vision and mission statement for the program and read the following as the purpose of detention: (1) to ensure public safety, (2) to ensure court attendance when it is otherwise unlikely the juvenile will appear in court and (3) there is probable cause that a juvenile committed a crime, is not a threat to public safety but is at risk to self and all alternatives have been exhausted. Donna Ennis and Ricky DeFoe have been involved with this program. There is an active committee in southern St. Louis County Donna Ennis is the chair.

Ricky DeFoe thanked County Attorney Ford for being here earlier to answer questions about the community forum. He further asked if there could be a representative from Fond du Lac on the oversight committee. Miss Ford stated that she had been in touch With Karen Diver, who had authorized Vanessa Northrup for this work. Donna Bluebird inquired if there would only be a representative from Fond du Lac. There are children from other reservations as well. Melanie Ford stated that the Native Americans were not caring for children of a single reservation.

Bill Morrisison stated that although we live in the state, we are still protected by the federal government, we are entitled to a federal attorney, but the state does not often recognize this under the state laws, there are few who understand treaty law. Melanie Ford stated that the oversight committee approved the pilot project for a risk assessment for evaluation of the child for the risk, they are hoping to begin to use in April, this data will be analyzed and presented in July in order to decrease the number of children of color in the system. The biggest piece of this is that alternatives to be made available, they may be expensive.

NEW BUSINESS

School District – Bob Grytdahl reported that, in the city of Duluth of ninth graders who are white 70% will graduate, 40% of the African Americans and 20% American Indians. There has been some change in desegregation legislation so money can be used to address the inequities in the graduation rates, in order to close the gap by utilizing (1) school district, (2) family and (3) community. This is the first time that they have identified this kind of a partnership. The meetings are each Thursday at 5 pm in the traditional Central High School in the boardroom; a meal is served. To close the achievement gaps they will look to hire coaches to work with students and families. Donavon Strong inquired if the Duluth public schools have an Indian advocate at each school. Bob Grytdahl did not know the answer. Rickey DeFoe pointed out that new school lines will leave schools with disproportionate numbers of minority and/or low-income students. Warner Wirta stated that 20% is a dismal number; and he heard that Native Americans have a higher rate of graduation on the reservation. Bob Grytdahl stated that these students see more people in leadership roles. Joy Dorscher stated that there was discussion when writing the new boundaries about the minority students but the discussion was ignored. Warner Wirta stated that mentors are essential to the success of young people.

Health Issues – Joy Dorscher reported on the academic enrichment programs at the Center of American Indian and Minority Health at the University of Minnesota Medical School. There is a high school program that takes place one weekend a month to teach students about research careers as well information on how to get into college. Joy Dorscher stated that students in the program tend to move on the next level of education. There is also a college program that is residential for either two or six weeks. Students get paid for their working the program. Warner Wirta stated that although there is a great deal of work to do, we have come a long way since he was a teacher. He stated that there is no understanding of the vast contributions that Natives have made to current society. Donovan Strong stated that he has seen schools near the reservations that have been successful by providing tutors and keeping a close eye on the progress of the students as well as providing traditional interactions on a regular basis. He will bring graduation statistics for these programs and will allow us to compare to those provided by Bob Grytdahl.

Housing / Homeless – Ron Boshey reported that there is not much to say right now, but he would like to get Bowman and Theis and Talle to meet with the commission. Ricky DeFoe stated that there is a young man who is having difficulty getting a home, he has been rejected because of his felony record. Ron Boshey stated that he could be of help in the appeal process.

ANNOUNCEMENTS, UPCOMING EVENTS AND COMMENTS FROM COMMISSION MEMBERS:

Eileen Luna-Firebaugh from the University of Arizona Tucson will be here March 17-20 and will begin a community assessment survey, the first steps in a police civilian review board. This will be her first visit to Duluth.

NEXT MEETING/DATE/LOCATION:

April 19, 2010, at 5:00 pm, Room 405, City Hall.

ADJOURNMENT:

Motion by Ron Boshey, seconded by Joy Dorscher, to adjourn the meeting. The motion was unanimously approved and the meeting was adjourned at 7:30 pm.